

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-11. (Cancelled)

12. (canceled).

13. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising

moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, and

as the laser beam approaches the seam end, distancing the focus of the laser beam from the surface to be welded, wherein at least one of

(a) the welding speed is reduced towards the seam end, and

(b) at the seam end a local beam movement occurs sideways beyond the seam.

14. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising

moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, and

as the laser beam approaches the seam end, distancing the focus of the laser beam from the surface to be welded, wherein at the seam end a local beam movement occurs sideways beyond the seam, and

wherein the local beam movement is in the shape of

(a) a decreasing spiral narrowing around the center of the seam end, or

(b) a circular movement or gyration superimposed transverse to the seam about the center of the seam end.

15. (canceled)

16. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising

moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, and

as the laser beam approaches the seam end, distancing the focus of the laser beam from the surface to be welded,

wherein the defocusing of the laser beam occurs along a linear progression.

17. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 13, wherein said laser welding is carried out with a laser scanner.

18. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising

moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, and

as the laser beam approaches the seam end, distancing the focus of the laser beam from the surface to be welded, wherein at least one of

(a) the welding speed is reduced towards the seam end, and

(b) at the seam end a local beam movement occurs sideways beyond the seam, and

wherein the seam segment within which the speed or focus is varied, or in which the sideways beam movement occurs, has a length of 2 to 5 mm.

19. (previously presented) The process according to Claim 18, wherein within the seam segment the laser output is reduced from 2000 - 1500 Watt to 500 - 0 Watt.
20. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 18, wherein the laser beam travels along the seam segment within 50 to 100 ms.
21. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 13, wherein the width of the lateral beam movement laterally to the weld seam is 1 to 5 mm to each side.
22. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising moving a laser

beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, wherein the laser beam power is reduced at the seam end, and wherein at least one of

(a) the welding speed is reduced towards the seam end,

(b) a beam movement occurs projecting locally laterally beyond the seam, and

(c) towards the seam end the focus of the laser beam is distanced from the surface to be welded.

23. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, wherein the laser beam power is reduced at the seam end, wherein a beam movement occurs projecting locally laterally beyond the seam, and wherein the local beam movement is in the shape of

(a) a decreasing spiral narrowing around the center of the seam end, or

(b) a circular movement or gyration superimposed transverse to the seam about the center of the seam end.

24. (canceled)

25. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam

having an end, wherein the laser beam power is reduced at the seam end, and wherein towards the seam end the focus of the laser beam is distanced from the surface to be welded, wherein the defocusing of the laser beam occurs along a linear progression.

26. (previously amended) The process according to Claim 23, wherein said laser welding is carried out with a laser scanner.
27. (previously amended) A process for laser beam welding with reduced formation of end craters, comprising moving a laser beam along a segment to be welded to form a weld seam having an end, wherein the laser beam power is reduced at the seam end, and wherein at least one of
- (a) the welding speed is reduced towards the seam end,
  - (b) a beam movement occurs projecting locally laterally beyond the seam, and
  - (c) towards the seam end the focus of the laser beam is distanced from the surface to be welded,
- wherein the terminal seam segment within which the power, speed or focus is varied, or in which the lateral beam movement occurs, has a length of 2 to 5 mm.

28. (Previously presented) The process according to Claim 27, wherein within the seam segment the laser output is reduced from 2000 - 1500 Watt to 500 - 0 Watt.
29. (Previously presented) The process according to Claim 27, wherein the laser beam travels through the seam segment within 50 to 100 ms.
30. (Previously presented) The process according to Claim 22, wherein the width of the lateral beam movement laterally to the weld seam is 1 to 5 mm to each side.